

Minutes of the Senate Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism Committee

Thursday, March 8th, 2007

9:00 a.m.

Room 110 Farnum Building

- Chairman Van Woerkom called the Committee to order at 9:05 a.m.
- Members Present: Van Woerkom, Gilbert, Birkholz and Whitmer
- Members Excused: Gleason
- Sen. Birkholz moved to approve the minutes for February 8th. Her motion was supported by Sen. Gleason and was approved unanimously.
- Chairman Van Woerkom invited Gene DeRossett, State Director for USDA Rural Development.
- Mr. DeRossett explained the history and mission of USDA Rural Development. They focus on three main priorities to improve rural areas: infrastructure, affordable housing and business. They are also involved with renewable energy programs as well. He provided each committee member with a list of projects in their district and awarded 852 million dollars in grants and loans last year.
- Chairman Van Woerkom invited Ron Steiner from the Starting Block to testify.
- Mr. Steiner explained that the Starting Block is a new kitchen incubator in Oceana County which was funded in part by USDA. They help small food based businesses with research and development. He also focused on the partnership between the MSU and USDA rural development in terms of fostering new economic growth.
- Sen. Gilbert motioned to adjourn the meeting.
- With no more business before the committee Chairman Van Woerkom adjourned the meeting at 9:40 a.m.